

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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The History of the American Federation of Teachers
in Los Angeles: 1919-1969

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in Education

by

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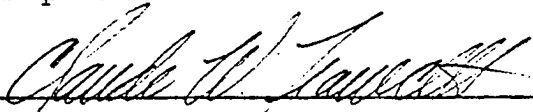
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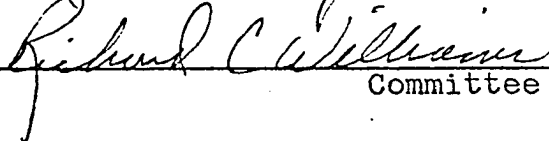
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To Doris, Stephen and Kathleen

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CHAPTER III

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF UNIONISM

Blanche Rinehart, in her article on Samuel Gompers, found that, "at the end of the war years, teachers were pressured, intimidated, and stampeded into resignation from their unions. Over half of the AFT membership succumbed" (1). Thus it appears that the experience of Local 77 was typical of teachers' unions throughout the United States. Rinehart adds that between 1930 and 1939 union membership spurted from 7,000 to 32,000 with most of the growth centered in New York City and Chicago (2). These two cities accounted for only two of the 134 locals in existence in the mid-thirties, one of which was Local #430 in Los Angeles (3).

Some of the events in Los Angeles occurring between the disappearance of Local 77 and the chartering of Local 430, have been discussed in the previous chapter. Two areas of the previous discussion were purposely omitted, 1) The question of communist influence in the schools, and

1. Rinehart, Blanche, "Mr. Gompers and the Teachers", Changing Education, I:2 (Summer, 1966), p. 16.

2. Ibid., p. 27.

3. Ibid.

2) The proliferation of teachers' associations. Perhaps an analysis of these two items now will give a clearer perspective when Local 430 itself is viewed.

COMMUNISM IN THE LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS

World War I not only failed to end all wars, but it spawned a new threat to world peace -- communism. Although the United States diplomatically ignored the communist host country until after Roosevelt was inaugurated, the issue of communist infiltration was not so easily ignored. Certain groups saw communists in every socialist or liberal group, including the IWW and other unions. To offset these innuendos the AFL President, William Green, denounced communism and its threat to all honest working men (4). His words had little noticable effect on the public. Responsive to the feelings of the electorate, congressional committees held hearings in Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles during the early thirties to determine the validity of charges of communist infiltration into the schools.

In Los Angeles several educators testified to personal knowledge of the presence of such agitators. Arthur Gold, Assistant Supervisor of High Schools and Thomas Elson, Principal of Roosevelt High, both attested to the

4. Los Angeles Times, January 10, 1927.

existence of communist cells in all thirty-one high schools (5). The most active groups were at Roosevelt, Hollenbeck, Hollywood, and Manual Arts High Schools (6).

This sweeping indictment produced only one hearing before the Board of Education, that of a student, Max Rosenstein. Charged with participation in a communist May Day rally he was denied his High School Diploma. Perhaps as a consequence of this case, the Board resolved to develop a curricular structure to off-set the spread of communism among the East Side schools (7). No evidence can be found to indicate either the content of the proposed curricular revision or its effectiveness, but presumably it stressed typical American virtues.

Less than three years later, in 1934, communism again became the focus of attention, but this time at the junior college level. An army reserve lieutenant testified before a congressional committee that Los Angeles Junior College was a "hot bed of sedition" (8), implicating five professors and a group of Roosevelt High School graduates.

5. Los Angeles Examiner, October 9, 1930; Los Angeles Record, October 9, 1930; Los Angeles Times, October 9, 1930.

6. Los Angeles Examiner, October 9, 1930.

7. Los Angeles Times, June 30, 1931.

8. Ibid., January 16, 1934.

Four months of intensive probing by the School Board revealed no substantiating evidence (9). Mere lack of documentation did not seem to discourage the red-hunters, especially since some of the newspapers continued to produce articles on the subject all through the 1930's (10). These charges of communist infiltration of the Los Angeles schools formed one element of the environment in which Local 430 functioned. The other element, the proliferation of other teachers' associations, should receive equal consideration.

THE ASSOCIATIONS -- MERGERS AND DIVISIONS

Previously in this narrative the founding of the major associations was outlined. First, in 1909, all Los Angeles educators were grouped into the Los Angeles City Teachers' Club. First to leave the club were the principals (1911), followed by the secondary teachers (1916) when the High School Teachers' Association was initiated. These actions finally brought a name change by the parent group from LACTC to the Elementary School Teachers' Asso-

9. Ibid., April 27, 1934.

10. Los Angeles Examiner, April 8, 1936. An example of this type of article appears in this issue. The Times and the Examiner printed more stories on communism than the other papers, featuring speeches by veterans' organizations and psuedo-patriotic groups such as the Better American Federation.

ciation sometime after 1925. Within the same period, another select few cast themselves into the Probationary Teachers' Association. It later admitted substitute teachers, resulting in a name change to Probationary and Substitute Teachers' Organization (ca. 1935).

These three teachers' organizations, ESTA, HSTA, and PSTO, while not voicing full agreement with salary and teacher reductions through the depression years, wavered between acknowledgement of the causes for the cuts and weak objections. The more militant teachers first labeled their organizations "company unions", then acted on their disapproval by creating the Classroom Teachers' Association (1935) (11). There are degrees of militancy, and the CTA proved to be too aggressive for some teachers. Neither the ESTA nor the HSTA was satisfactory. As might be expected, still another group emerged, the Classroom Teachers Federation (1936). One final step remained to be taken. With the self-removal of the disenchanted minority (CTA and CTF) the remaining organization, the Elementary Teachers Club, and joined with HSTA and PSTO to found the Affiliated Teachers' Associations of Los Angeles

11. Personal Interview, Harry Shepro, former President, Local 430.

(ATOLA) (ca. 1936) (12). ATOLA, encompassing a large majority of teachers, was opposed by the Classroom Teachers' Association and the Classroom Teachers Federation on the eve of the emergence of the new union, Local 430.

THE NEW UNION APPEARS

National AFT headquarters had been working quietly for a number of years to re-form the teachers' union in Los Angeles, using the California State Teachers Federation as its vehicle. In 1932, preliminary plans were drawn up, only to be discarded when enough enthusiasm failed to appear. Four years later the state federation moved again, this time in cooperation with the County Federation of Labor, announcing to the press that "...soon we will have enough strength to come out in the open and hold meetings in Los Angeles" (13). This is reminiscent of the statements put forth in 1919 when Local 77 was chartered, indicating perhaps that the union leaders were still fearful of retaliation unless a strong showing could be made. This inclusion of the County Federation of Labor in the announcement was tantamount to a challenge to the Board of

12. ATOLA included administrators, teachers, nurses, counselors and like groups. ATOLA was ruled by a Board of Directors representing each organization. It was a prominent force in Los Angeles education from its formation until about 1960.

13. Los Angeles Times, April 8, 1936.

Education, implying that organized labor would not tolerate interference with the teachers' union. The leadership of this still secret union included Ted Whitehead, Ezra Stone, and Samuel Wixman, former members of the Classroom Teachers' Association. They had approached the AFT for a charter, finally issued in 1935.

Almost a year passed before the AFT felt secure enough to embark on an open organizational drive. For this momentous event, the union obtained the services of Vierling Kersey, Superintendent of Public Instruction and John F. Dalton, President of the Board of Education, and former President of the California Federation of Labor, as keynote speakers. Significantly Kersey had pronounced one year earlier, "This organization is not representative of the teaching profession in California", (14) yet that day he was featured at a union meeting, the purpose of which was to recruit 300 teachers by June and 11,000 teachers (the entire staff) as soon as possible. Whether this change of stance was real or whether Kersey appeared as a gesture of objectivity cannot be determined, but certainly his presence lent stature to Local 430.

A SUMMARY OF UNION ACTIVITIES

A. Academic Freedom and Tenure

The importance of salary and other economic issues should not be overstated, nor should all of the questions

14. Ibid.

of academic freedom and tenure be understated. The latter has a more idealistic connotation while the former strikes nearer to the practical world in which teachers live. This does not infer that academic freedom is unrealistic, it is rather a more elusive concept, difficult to define and subject to misinterpretation.

In mid-1938, Local 430 and ATOLA presented a joint objection to the Board in reference to dismissal of teachers without due process (15). Representatives of the college Section, Local 430 (16) spoke on the issue, citing three cases, including that of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Chaney (17). Charged with participation in the Peace Movement, the Channeys had been summarily dismissed by the Board. When sufficient evidence to support the association's contention that irregular procedures had been followed, the Board rescinded its action (18). The several presentations to the Board and its response to them prior to the final disposition

15. Ibid., March 16, 1937.

16. American Teacher, 12:3 (January 2, 1938) p. 32.

17. Ibid., 24:5 (January, 1940) p. 34.

18. Local 430 was headed by three presidents -- Harry Shepro, a teacher at Hollywood High School; Winnifred Betts, former member of HSTA; Harold Orr, remembered as the one who led Local 430 into the communist inquiry.

of the Chaney matter, seem to indicate that involvement in union activities undergirded the original charge of participation in the peace movement. Whether this is true or not, the Board did establish a new rule on organizational activity. As an aftermath of the Matteson dispute in 1919, the Board had prohibited membership in the union. This policy was rescinded by the new Board Policy 65a which, in essence, permitted teachers to join any organization assuring equal treatment to all groups; and admonished administrators against coercion of teachers (19).

This landmark decision applied to ATOLA and the AFT, but since membership in ATOLA's constituent organizations had been considered a professional obligation, it appears that the AFT should have received the greater benefit. This is not, however, reflected in the membership statistics. Therefore, although membership in Local 430 was now "legal", teachers were no more eager to enlist in the union than before (20). Not only the Board of Education was prone to limit the political activities of teachers. When Eisenberg editorially attacked Jack Tenny, a candidate for reelection to the State Legislature, she and another

19. American Teacher, 25:3 (November 1940) p. 2.

20. Ibid., 22:5 (May-June 1938) p. 32.

teacher "...were subpoenaed to appear before the Tenney Un-American Activities Committee (21). Specifically, "Mrs. Eisenberg was charged with teaching subversive doctrines" (22), but the Board, pursuing an independent investigation announced, "The evidence does not support the complaint that these teachers imposed communistic doctrines upon students in their classes or that they 'slanted' or improperly influenced the articles of the school paper, The Hunters Call" (23). Despite this exoneration, the Board two years later summarily transferred Mrs. Eisenberg from the school. Since her attacks on the system had not abated and since the transfer procedures were violated, it may be argued that the Board was convinced by its own evidence.

Through the columns of the Newsletter, the union opposed the dismissal of a principal, Ione Swan, and a probationary teacher, Mrs. Barbara Morell. The former allegedly sought "...the maintenance in the schools

21. The representatives were Dr. Samuel Urner, President, College Section, Local 430 and Professor Harold J. Laski. At this early date (1939) Local 430 already incorporated enough college members to justify a separate section. This is indicative of the composition of Local 430. For several years there was a preponderance of high school and junior college members. When the Junior College section split off in 1967, to form a separate union, the balance between elementary and secondary teachers became more equal.

22. American Teacher, 23:8, May 1939, p. 4.

23. Ibid., 25:2, October 1940, p. 29.

of a democratic spirit of free discussion and criticism and an unimpeded competition of ideas", (24) while Morell had suffered from accusations based on "...vague criticisms of her loyalty by unnamed persons" (25). Although Swan was discharged and Morell re-instated, the significance of these events is the interpretation given to the charges by the Newsletter. It is doubtful that any Board of Education would fire a principal for initiating a program of democratic, free discussion of ideas unless those ideas were incompatible with our concept of democracy. Further, the Board did uphold Morell in face of "vague criticisms", so one suspects the Newsletter's motives in attacking the Board.

The questions of professional conduct and academic freedom are trying ones, the demarcations between ethical and unethical conduct are blurred. It is doubtful that the Newsletter's or the union's standards were any more correct than the criteria established by the Board or the legislature.

24. While this was official Board Policy, its effectiveness is open to question. Several interviews have revealed that many administrators did in fact advise new teachers and older teachers interested in administrative positions not to join the union. The author, himself, on two separate occasions was informed that if he joined the union, the administrator would not recommend him for promotion. There is no way to verify these incidents, but it appears that some administrators did violate policy on occasion.

25. Membership in Local 430 never was imposing. In 1936 only 40 teachers joined.

B. Curriculum

The union's record of achievement in areas other than membership was also less than imposing. Local #430 inserted itself into the controversy over the removal of the Rugg social studies texts from the schools. These books used a problem solving approach to the study of the social sciences, a technique then under attack by conservative elements throughout California (26). Over protestations of Local 430 and the CTF, these books were removed in 1942 (27). Similar action was instituted by the San Francisco Board of Education the following Spring (28).

A minor victory was won by the union with the appointment of AFT President, Abraham Minkus, as chairman of the Inter-racial Democratic committee. This study group was convened by the Board as a result of union presentations on segregation in the schools in 1943 (29). Less successful was the union's attempt to incorporate a unit in the secondary curriculum

26. American Teacher, 28:8, May, 1943.

27. Ibid., 26:7, April, 1942, p. 6.

28. Ibid., 27:8, May, 1943, p. 6.

29. Ibid., 38:7, April, 1944, p. 39; Los Angeles Times, November 23, 1943.

devoted to the history of labor. Approval in principle was declared by the Board, but no action beyond referring to a committee was taken.

TEACHER WELFARE

Even though Local 430 actively supported teachers in several areas, its primary emphasis was upon the economic aspect of teacher welfare. The nature of the educational system forces teachers and boards of education to consider concurrently several items which impinge upon the economics of employment. A sampling of an agenda would include such items as budget, salary, class size, and evaluation (30). Whenever one subject is discussed by a board of education, the other four hover in the background. Thus the material that follows will be equally inclusive (31).

Between 1946 and 1952 Local 430 presented to the Board cogent arguments for increased salaries, pointing out that there had been a "...disproportionate increase in administrative costs as compared to teaching costs..." (32).

30. Evaluation appears here because of a continuing discussion of merit pay, a system whereby a teacher's proficiency would be a factor in salary computations.

31. As indicated in the footnotes, the content of this section was derived from data supplied by Mrs. Frances Eisenberg, Editor of the Newsletter, published by Local 430.

32. Newsletter, Local 430, September, 1951.

One particular grievance was the Board's refusal to provide a free inservice program for teachers. Although the registration and material fee was inconsequential, the union felt that even this should be eliminated since the system ultimately benefitted through improved teacher competence. As a demonstration of its interest in the Board's budget problems, the union consistently supported bond and tax elections, a not unexpected stand. On the other hand, the Board consistently refused to accept Federal monies despite pressure from the union and ATOLA (33).

As noted earlier, Los Angeles had been confronted with over-crowded classrooms, resulting in double sessions and overworked teachers. According to Frances Eisenberg the "...class overload [in 1946] was expressed in 371 nervous breakdowns of teachers in one semester" (34). Again it was the problem of allocating budget monies either to higher salaries or more teachers. Whenever this decision is made, it is expected that some teachers will be displeased no matter what the decision. That this was true in 1946 is attested by the numerous appearances before the Board by representatives of all associations pleading for both higher wages and fewer children per class. No solution was ever achieved.

33. Ibid., June, 1946; October, 1950.

34. Ibid., September, October, 1946.

The salary schedule for teachers, even an unsatisfactory one, offers a guarantee of a predictable wage increase. Teachers tend to favor a salary schedule based upon longevity and years of education. Seldom will they tolerate any deviation from this system. Conversely, many superintendents, university professors, Boards of Education, and the public would prefer a modified schedule partially based on demonstrated competencies. Teachers hold firm to the shibboleth that the end product of education (the child) cannot be measured objectively. Therefore, the person responsible for molding the product cannot be rated as to his effectiveness. Merit pay becomes a threat to teachers who fear that partiality by administrators will end their regular procession up the salary schedule. When a merit-pay plan was under study by the Board in 1947, the Newsletter attacked it as an "...unscientific, easily manipulated" (35) plan designed "...for the personal or political persecution of teachers"; (36) and one which "...promoted thought control of both teachers and students" (37). It is difficult to reconcile a merit pay plan with "thought control" as charged by the Newsletter, especially when the intent of the project as

35. Ibid., June/July, 1947.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

outlined by Board President J. Paul Elliott was that "a teacher is to advance to any higher step only if she or he is rendering satisfactory service and undergoing consistent and continuous professional improvement" (38). Such a straight-forward statement appears to be entirely reasonable, objective, and completely free of innuendo, thought control, or persecution. It merely requires that teachers perform that for which they were hired -- educating children, competently and efficiently. If as the Newsletter indicated, "...only the big business and taxpayer interests were asking for this program", (39) the statement included a majority of those persons interested in the product turned out by the institution. The jargon of the seventies calls this concern for education, "accountability", a term that may replace the opprobrium "merit pay". A victory of sorts was achieved by the union with the announcement by Mr. Toll, Board member, that "...there will be no connection between teacher evaluation and salary increases" (40).

ELECTIONS

As a representative speaker for dissatisfied teachers

38. Ibid., September, 1947.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., November, 1947.

it is only natural to expect that the union would seek redress of the grievances discussed above through participation in Board of Education elections. It can be assumed that the union would concentrate on two items: first, publicizing specific issues which would place the Board in a poor light; and, second, lending support to any person or group which was at odds with the Board. Thus the union supported the Citizens' Committee for Better Education whose stated purpose was "to secure a more liberal, education-minded Board of Education" (41). Further, when a news commentator listed the Board of Education "...as one of [the] reactionary civic groups of this city" (42), his statement was given due space in the union paper.

In 1947, 1949, and 1951, Local 430 opposed specific candidates: 1947 all incumbents; 1949 Toll, Elliott and Becker; 1951 Larrabee. The latter's defeat was heralded as "...a reflection of a growing public desire to make changes in Board personnel and policies" (43).

It is not necessary to enumerate the many areas where Local 430 detected supposed laxity or lack of concern by the Board. Suffice it to say that overcrowded classes, lack of materials, and protection of teachers from

41. Ibid., October, 1946.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

unsubstantiated charges were high on the list. Even though the union could not achieve victory in every election, its willingness to state a position, present its arguments, and work for a particular candidate was laudatory. In alliance with the local labor organizations the teachers' union did exert some leverage on Board members either during election campaigns or in the interim between contests.

THE CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL AND LOCAL 430

As early as 1938, representatives of the CLC appeared as allies of Local 430 before the Board in protest to proposed salary reductions. Concerted ATOLA and union efforts brought a restoration of salary, but class size, the need for special classes for sub-normal children, and the lack of educational materials were tabled items (44). Again in 1940, J.W. Buzzell, Secretary of the Central Labor Council urged the Board to consider teacher-pupil ratio, democratic procedures in administration, and teacher participation in policy formation, curriculum, and selection of department heads. According to Winnifred Betts (45), President of 430, of the 800 teachers who had resigned in the last five years over five hundred had been elementary

44. Ibid., March, 1951.

45. Ibid.

instructors. The Board employed only 140 replacements, escalating class size to over 45 pupils. But crowded classes were but one item; for, as noted above the CLC and the union were challenging the Board on a broad front, incorporating into their quest for improved working conditions a demand for a voice in the managerial aspect of education (46).

Despite the frequent assistance rendered by the CLC, a group within #430 was displeased with the CLC leadership (47). In the late 1930's "Sherman and Buzzell, two old time bossist leaders who dominated the Los Angeles Central Labor Council" (48), were challenged by Harry Shepro, AFT, in his bid for the presidency. His two fellow delegates from the AFT, the Teamsters delegate and the representative from the Retail Clerk's Union, campaigned on a liberal platform while Buzzell stood by the conservative dogma espoused by the building trades group. Since the teacher's union was still an insignificant power within the total labor movement in Los Angeles, it was imperative that the Teacher-Teamster-Retail Clerk coalition remain firm if Shepro was to oust Buzzell. Unfortunately for the triumvirate, Buzzell proved to be a better politician.

46. Ibid., February, 1946.

47. Ibid., June, 1951.

48. Personal Interview, Harry Shepro, 1969.

Only days before the election he telegraphed to the Teamster's president, urging that official to intervene with the Los Angeles teamster local, directing them to cast ballots for Buzzell. Using strict union discipline on recalcitrant members, the president achieved the sought for switch in allegiance from Shepro to Buzzell. Bereft of teamster support, the teachers and retail clerks lost their bid for control (49). One further coup was initiated by the teachers who placed Lee Goyer in contention with Buzzell for presidency of the CLC. Fighting alone in this instance, Local 430 was unable to muster any significant number of ballots for their candidate (50). Discouraged by this debacle and the previous defeat, Local 430 withdrew from further contests for control of the CLC.

STATE AND NATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The relationships between Local 430 and the state or national AFT was similarly non-productive. Officers of that local have indicated that the national organization provided very little practical assistance, issuing phrases of encouragement, perhaps sending a national officer to Los Angeles, but not contributing substantially to the

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

union's welfare. Harry Shepro, the first president of Local 430 stated categorically, "They never did anything for 430, nothing"; (51) adding that "...we used to get their periodicals once in a while" (52).

Those persons familiar with union organization charts will appreciate these complaints by locals, recognizing at once the validity of grievances and the inability of the national body to alleviate the situation. A crucial point in the understanding of this problem is contained in the AFT Constitution where the purpose of the National Office is "To bring associations of teachers into relations of mutual assistance and cooperation" (53). Pearse elaborates on this concept in listing the national office functions: the AFT collects per capita dues from each local federation; it disburses financial aid; it finances the activities of national organizers; it publishes newsletters and periodicals; and assists the locals in researching legal questions (54). In this context, Local 430 did not receive the assistance it may have felt entitled to, but neither did a host of other small federations. The national office

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Constitution, Local 1021, Article II, No. 1.

54. Pearse, op. cit. See for a detailed explanation of the national organization and its function.

did not insert itself intimately into the affairs of any local except in circumstances as precisely outlined in its constitution (55). Likewise, the national office preferred to apply its resources to cities where the local federations were achieving significant success in organizing teachers. Since membership in Local 430 did not exceed 100 until 1939, and did not increase to 300 until 1945 (and only then because of the merger of the Classroom Teachers' Federation), it is understandable why the national office should ignore Los Angeles. Perhaps Local 430 was overwhelmed with a sense of its own importance or the bitterness expressed in the writings and conversations of former members may have had deeper roots. Whatever the cause, it is significant that Local 430 felt neglected and acted accordingly.

On the state level, the kinship between Local 430 and the California State Federation of Teachers (later abbreviated to the CFT) was more productive. Although the CFT had been accused of being "...mainly a talking group" (56), this situation soon was resolved. Between 1935 and 1940, newly chartered locals in Berkeley, San Francisco, Fresno, and Los Angeles sent their officers and other interested persons to Fresno once a year.

55. Ibid.

56. Personal Interview, Harry Shepro, 1969.

Common problems were discussed; tentative solutions were presented. One frequent topic of conversation was the weak organizational structure of the CSFT, a fault which Local 430 helped to ameliorate. At its insistence, "...a part-time position of organizer was created in the latter part of the forties. The first one was from up north. He used to come down and go into various parts of the county and other cities and sometimes he brought in a few people to the locals" (57). A revitalized CSFT resulted; #430 began to exert leadership in the state, with members becoming state officers and convention leaders. One observer stated that when Local 430 was expelled from the AFT a strained relationship between the new Local 1021 and the CSFT became apparent, partially because of the empathy that had existed between members of #430 and the state federation officers (58).

However, as with the national office, the state federations were creatures of the locals and their efficiency, financial stability, and ability to assist locals were a function of the leadership exerted by the locals. In sum, the CSFT was no more and no less than what the locals wished it to be.

57. Ibid.

58. Personal Interview, Rodge Thomas, 1969.

DISSOLUTION OF LOCAL 430

The preceding sections have outlined the thirteen year history of Local 430, with emphasis upon its relationships with educational and union organizations. This local began its career on a platform featuring the speech by the superintendent of schools; it ended its life under intense criticism from the Board of Education and state legislative entities. An analysis of the events leading to its downfall will be preceded by a brief recounting of those occurrences.

In the immediate post-war years a group of dissidents, within Local 430 arose under the leadership of Walter Thomas. These teachers sensed that the union had "...greater concern for a sharper, more tightly focused political approach that didn't appeal broadly to the teachers of Los Angeles" (59). Consequently, the dissidents established the Committee for a Democratic Union (1947) hoping to alter the course which the union was pursuing. During 1947, President Harold Orr "wielded such a heavy gavel at Executive Board Meetings" (60) that it was impossible for the CDU to present its concerns to the Board or to the general membership. Since this effort to communicate was blocked, the committee persuaded Walter Thomas to challenge Orr for

59. Personal Interview, Walter Thomas, 1969.

60. Ibid.

the presidency. Voting irregularities were blamed by Thomas as contributing factors to the CDU defeat (61).

Frustrated at the local level, the CDU levied a "Tax" upon its members to collect the \$80.00 needed to finance Thomas' trip to the 1948 convention at Glenwood Springs, Colorado. The purpose of this trip was to present evidence of voting irregularities and statements from the CDU purporting to show that Local 430 had violated the AFT constitution. The Executive Board, composed of sixteen national vice-presidents listened to the charges, then cast a unanimous vote to conduct an investigation of Local 430.

From this point in time there is some discrepancy as to the exact sequence of events. Eyewitness reports do not concur in all details with published materials, nor do the reports of the National Executive Board agree with the statements issued by the Local 430. In spite of these differences of opinion it is possible to summarize the major events.

After the initial decision to investigate had been made by the outgoing Executive Board in July, 1948, the new Board appointed President John Eklund and Vice-Presidents Selma Borchardt and Arthur Elder to open the investigation. This committee spent September 1 through September 5 in

61. Personal Interview, Walter Thomas, 1969. Mr. Thomas cited instances of members from other teacher locals being given ballots by officials of Local 430.

Los Angeles, interviewing officers and members of Local 430, former members of Local 430, community leaders, and representatives from local and state labor organizations (62). In its report to the Board the committee concluded that Local 430 was guilty of the following charges:

1. The AFT in Los Angeles was in general disrepute.
2. Local 430 participated officially in affairs that were embarrassing to the labor movement and which alienated the community.
3. Local 430 constantly and publicly flaunted its differences with the Los Angeles Central Trades Council.
4. Publications of Local 430 were undignified and discreditable.
5. Local 430 refused to take action in support of Section 9, Article 3, of the AFT Constitution. (This bars membership to Fascists, Nazis, and Communists).
6. Local 430 cooperated with a CIO union, United Public Workers, contrary to directives of the AFL.

The report and accompanying documentation was persuasive enough to cause the Board to cast a unanimous vote to revoke Local 430's charter, effective September 20, 1948 (63). Article IV, Section 6 of the AFT constitution provided that a local could appeal a charter

62. Letter from office of Secretary-Treasurer, AFT, Wayne State University, AFT Archives.

63. News Release, Local 430. This release, provided by Mrs. Eisenberg, could not be located in any newspaper of general circulation in Los Angeles.

revocation at the next convention. Some of the more recalcitrant members of Local 430 were unwilling to wait another year to argue their case. In a series of letters to the Board, the local demanded the right to air its grievances in the national publication, the American Teacher. This request was denied by the Executive Council after quoting the pertinent sections of the AFT Constitution on the right to appeal to the convention (64). Blocked in its efforts to use the American Teacher as a public forum, Local 430 agreed to send a delegation to the 1949 convention in Milwaukee hoping to refute the charges and gain reinstatement. This may have been a tactical error, for it was at this convention, in full view of all the delegates, that charges of communist infiltration were discussed (65).

The investigation committee, in its public statements, had not alleged communist influence in the local for cogent reasons. First, such evidence is markedly circumstantial and difficult to substantiate; second, publication of such charges would only insense the public, doing much to convince people that perhaps unions were festering sores of radicalism. Instead, the committee had made the innocuous

64. American Teacher, 34:3, December, 1949, p. 28.

65. Personal Interview, Joseph Voorhees, 1969. First President of Local 1021, the unit chartered to replace Local 430. Mr. Voorhees attended the 1949 convention at which Local 430 defended itself against the charges by the committee.

announcement that Local 430 had failed to take action in support of Section 9, Article 3, of the AFT constitution when such action was proposed. The implication of communism was evident for those persons acquainted with the provision, but not for the general public.

When the delegates from Local 430 presented their arguments, one of the speakers inadvertently referred to Section 9, Article 3, whereupon the spokesman for the investigating committee responded, "...we did not investigate that issue per se, but since you have brought it up, there did come to the attention of the committee that the minutes of your meetings showed there was evidence that you were following the Communist Party line" (66). At the conclusion of the hearing, the convention upheld the revocation by a roll-call vote of 792-108 (67).

This decision neither silenced the stalwart Newsletter nor did it bring the dissolution of the LAFT. The paper accused Board of Education President J. Paul Elliott and AFT President John Eklund with collusion in the charter revocation. In September, 1949, the Newsletter asserted, "We refused to surrender our independence to certain labor officials. We dared to act on the basis of our belief in the unity of the labor movement by cooperating

66. Ibid.

67. American Teacher, 34:1, June 1949, p. 3.

with the CIO. We dared to oppose strongly the Board of Education whenever the interests of the teachers or schools required it. In short, we were cut off by an Executive Council which had succumbed to reactionary hysteria because we were a democratic, liberal, fighting organization" (68).

These were tenacious union members. Bereft of state and national affiliation, refused admittance to local Central Trades Council meetings, one would have expected the LAFT to expire. This was not the case, but from a peak membership of over 800, only a stalwart group of less than 100 remained, a regression to a membership equivalent to its first eight years of existence (69). Ever since the union had been linked publicly to a CIO affiliate, Harold Orr, the last president of #430, had been trying to forge a legal bond with that local and through it, to the national CIO (70). This move was unsuccessful. To forestall any further steps in that direction, the late Walter Reuther, President of the VAW-CIO announced that "...teachers should join AFL-AFT. I'm opposed to the CIO organizing teachers. That belongs to the AFL. We should not have teachers' unions" (71).

Isolated now from the labor movement, the LAFT still

68. Newsletter, September 1949.

69. Personal Interview, Joseph Voorhees, 1969.

70. Los Angeles Times, August 24, 1948.

71. Ibid., February 28, 1950.

continued its presentations to the Board of Education, even in the face of charges that it was composed of the "...same old left-wingers that headed old Local 430" (72). Fighting discouragement among the small coterie of faithful workers, LAFT brandished its independence of the AFL-AFT while attacking simultaneously state and national investigating committees during the 1950's, charging them with "red-baiting" and "witch-hunts" (73).

Unfortunately for the LAFT, there was no lack of witnesses willing to testify before these committees. Leroy Travers Herndon, Jr., a Glendale City College professor, named Marjorie Hay, former secretary of #430 as a member of his communist Party Cell in his appearance before the House of Un-American Activities Committee (74). At the committee's request Herndon explained that the dozen alleged communist teachers in Local 430 "...attempted to control the policies of the teachers' union. The unit would caucus in advance of meetings of the union and then put over its moves. We didn't want a complete slate of officers who were communists" (75).

72. Ibid., November 12, 1949.

73. Ibid., December 10, 1950.

74. Los Angeles Mirror, March 27, 1953.

75. Ibid.

On the basis of this and similar testimonies, the HUAC began questioning those union members implicated by witnesses. Among those called were Abraham Minkus, Riggan Avenue Elementary School; Harry Shepro, North Hollywood High School; Serrill Gerber, Evergreen Avenue Elementary School; Rose Pasell, Roosevelt High School; Mrs. Jean Benson Wilkenson and Mrs. Frances Eisenberg (76). In all, fifty teachers were called by the committee, but those listed above had announced to the press that they would refuse to testify (77). Although it was a brave position to assume, the principle of refusing to testify against friends (78) eventually led to their dismissal from teaching. The Board of Education rule that refusal to testify before any legislative committee would bring immediate expulsion was challenged in the courts but was upheld (79).

Bereft of its leadership, its membership dwindling, and its treasury depleted, the LAFT gradually faded into obscurity. All available evidence indicates that 1955 was the last year in which any vestige of an organization remained. Some of the former members drifted into Local 1021, others deserted teaching for new professions, while

76. Ibid., March 27, 28, 30, 31, 1953.

77. Ibid., March 27, 1953.

78. Personal Interview, Harry Shepro, 1969.

79. Los Angeles Mirror, August 28, 1953.

at least one person was purported to have emigrated to Australia in search of a more equable political climate (80).

SOME FURTHER OBSERVATIONS

Local 430, AFT, AFL, endured for thirteen years in Los Angeles and existed for another six or seven years as a shadow organization. It is appropriate and necessary to summarize and analyze its accomplishments as well as its failures for three reasons. First, it was the only successful teachers' union in Los Angeles; second, Local 430 laid the foundation upon which its successor, Local 1021 was to build its structure; and third, it presented an organizational alternative for those teachers dissatisfied with the "professional" associations.

Local 430 emerged as a result of two sets of circumstances which brought the teachers' union into focus. First, the AFT and the AFL both desired a teachers' local in Los Angeles ever since Local 77's disappearance. Both Chicago and New York teachers had built a fairly strong organization. Since the AFT wished to achieve recognition in the labor movement, expansion of its activities to Los Angeles would be an acceptable beginning. If the AFT could establish a local in the "open shop" capital of the

80. Personal Interview, Walter Thomas, 1969.

West, it would be a noteworthy achievement. Thus the AFT and the AFL were awaiting for a propitious moment.

Second, within the several teachers' associations in Los Angeles rumblings of discontent were being heard. Dissatisfied with salaries, working conditions, and Board procedures, these teachers were actively seeking an alternative organization, perhaps one that would speak more stridently in their behalf. Fortuitously, the AFT desires for a local unit in Los Angeles and the Los Angeles' teachers' need for a better outlet for their grievances blossomed simultaneously. The question of whether the AFT fomented the rebelliousness within the association or whether the militants encouraged the AFT to send organizers to Los Angeles is a vexing one. Doubtless there was encouragement on both sides, but the issuance of a new Los Angeles Charter was the nexus between the two. The intricate maneuverings by the teachers and the AFT which forged the link is beyond the scope of this study.

Once formed, Local 430 needed to clarify its positions relevant to the Board of Education, other teacher associations, other non-teacher unions, as well as the CSFT and the national AFT. In the process of defining and refining these relationships, Local 430, necessarily, was determining its goals and objectives. Once an organization delineates its function vis á vis another body, several alternatives are immediately discarded. Thus, a choice

of action, once made and acted upon, becomes a channel whose walls constrict further actions. While it is not impossible for an organization to reverse direction, it is a difficult choice to make and formidable to implement. The point is that the decisions Local 430 made early in its career tended to direct it toward the events of 1948.

The first ingredient of the new union has been established -- teachers dissatisfied with the then current organizations. That Local 430 was the most liberal association is attested to by the formation of the Classroom Teachers Federation, composed of teachers also unhappy with ESTA, HSTA, et al., but not yet ready to ally with the group that would become #430. Even the relaxation of Board policy on membership in unions did little to enhance growth. The large increase in numbers in 1943 was due to the merger of CTA and Local 430. Thus Local 430 was in the beginning a small, militant minority organization.

How did Local 430 appear to the Board of Education? The Board members saw an organization concerned about teacher's salaries, large classes, a shortage of materials and supplies. As these items equally worried HSTA and ESTA, there was little discernable difference among the organizations. The Board also witnessed Local 430 defending principals and teachers who had been removed or transferred by the Board for what it considered "tainted"

activities -- involvement in peace movements, fostering open discussion of "democratic" movements, and teaching subversive doctrines. The union attacked the Board over its removal of the Rugg texts. As a capstone, Board members were first accused of being reactionaries and then were subjected to a vigorous campaign as the union sought to replace them with more liberal candidates. None of these actions by the union fostered a spirit of helpfulness on the part of the Board when its adversary was queried by legislative bodies.

Lastly, the degree of cooperation between the union and various associations should be considered. Although there are few records to substantiate to any degree charges of vilification or calumny by the union towards ATOLA or its predecessors, it is known that the teachers who initiated the union were a dissident group within those associations. It can be presumed from scattered references to ATOLA as a "company union" that #430 was at least cool toward its larger rival. Few instances of close cooperation have been substantiated.

When the question of relationships between Local 430 and its brother federations is posed, the record is more clear. Early in its career, Local 430 was supported by the Central Labor Council. It rewarded this advocacy by challenging the CLC leadership in two bitter elections because it was a conservative hierarchy dominated by the

building trades bloc. The teachers' union increased the estrangement by consorting with a CIO local. Actions by Local 430 in these spheres only alienated its labor brothers.

Within the scope of state and national relations similar discordant notes can be discerned. As related earlier, the CSFT was a fledgling entity when Local 430 evolved. Disturbed over the weaknesses inherent in the structure of CSFT, Local 430 initiated reforms and grasped control. During #430's tenure, there were in the state organization members who were dissatisfied with the solution (81). These persons gradually wrested control from 430 adherents after that Local was disbanded. While the state body was pro-430, it had little effect upon activities of a purely local nature and thus can be disregarded in any assessment of Local 430.

Similarly, the national office intruded only slightly into any local's bailiwick. It's role was to channel money and organizational talent into needed areas. In the words of Harry Shepro, "it didn't do anything". Available records indicate that few visits were made to this outpost of teacher unionism by national officers and only dribbles of talent or dollars emerged from Chicago headquarters.

81. Personal Interview, Raoul Teilhet, 1969.

In profile then, we see a small minority organization pecking at the Board of Education while defending unpopular practices. It was at least uncooperative if not belligerent toward its massive rival, ATOLA, antagonistic in its relations with the Central Labor Council, in control of an ineffective state federation of teachers, and all but ignored by the national office.

With this as a portrait, it is difficult to discern positive achievements. It did establish a few precedents and thus achievements.

THE LEGACY OF LOCAL 430

By virtue of its very existence, Local 430 shredded some fallacies and undergirded some hopes. First, Local 430 shattered the shibboleth that Los Angeles was an iron-clad anti-union city in which a teachers' union could not survive. Second, the Board of Education, while miffed by particular aggressions committed by Local 430, realized that this group varied but little from other associations. More vigorous at times, pursuing slightly different tactics, accepting bleak challenges, it was not a completely unknown factor suddenly thrust upon the scene. Third, the press and its public found in the union ranks a deep concern for the welfare of teachers, one shared by many civic groups. Although there was much to criticize in the union there was an equal quantity of praise due. There occurred

a realization that a teachers' union did not equate with immediate and comprehensive violence and chaos. Fourth, the union constructed pathways into the Central Labor Council Halls. Two members on the council were a distinct minority, but their presence was a reminder to other unions that teachers were real people facing problems quite like those of other union members. Local 430 gradually fell into disfavor on the council, but this dispute did not sever the ties originally woven between the two. Fifth, the teachers' local helped strengthen the state organization, leaving to Local 1021 the task of renewing the bond after the initial hiatus following the revocation proceedings.

Sixth, the union was an alternate haven for teachers who were dissatisfied, discontented and dissident. Until the union, teachers in these minority classifications could choose to remain in HSTA or LACTC, abiding by decisions and paying dues, or they could resign. This was not a very satisfactory solution for persons committed to changing organizations and education. With the union present, their energies could be channeled, in their eyes, more productively.

It might be said that Local 430, through its existence, created in Los Angeles an atmosphere more conducive to, and accepting of, the concept of teacher unionism. This was its legacy to Local 1021. How that local built upon its bequest will be next discussed.

a candidate may be good journalism but it demonstrates a lack of objectivity, which in essence, is the hallmark of an outstanding newspaper.

MEMBERSHIP

The history of teachers' unions in Los Angeles as discussed above can be stated succinctly: three union locals were chartered; the first disappeared with barely a trace; the second had its charter revoked; the third lost its identity through a merger with a rival organization. Further, none of these three locals ever attracted a significant number of teachers. On the surface, then, it is apparent that teachers' unions were unsuccessful in Los Angeles. The obvious question that must be asked is "Why?" But this query is more easily posed than answered for several reasons.

One index of strength is membership. Statistics revealing teacher membership in local unions is not collated by state or national government bodies. The national federations invariably refer queries on this subject to the locals themselves. Unfortunately, local teacher unions do not always maintain past records, as mentioned earlier. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides data on broad union classifications, lumping teachers with other white-collar workers, so these data are not especially useful here. However, pursuing what Bernstein has labeled "an exercise

in crazy-quilt making" (61), fragmentary figures have been compiled for Locals 430 and 1021 in Los Angeles (62).

Figure III shows the slow but continuing growth of Local 430 from 1936 to 1948 with some minor exceptions. Between January 1941 and January 1942 membership was halved, most probably due to the draft and then the declaration of war in December 1941. The end of that war may account for a similarly large increase between July 1945 and January 1946. Fluctuations in total membership from then until January 1948 reflect the increase in honorable withdrawals and arrearages, two situations which suggest there was internal disagreement over the liberal policies of Local 430.

A comparison of membership in Local 430 and the national AFT for the same period yields these figures:

61. Labor History, 2:2, Spring 1961, p. 153. Bernstein, Irving, "The Growth of American Unions, 1945-60".

62. Local 77 had such an ephemeral life that no attempt has been made to draw significant conclusions concerning its relevance from membership alone.

FIGURE III
MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS FOR LOCAL 430
1936-1948

Date	Membership in Preceding Report	New Members	Reinstated	Transfer	Total	Deductions- Honorable	Withdrawal In Arrears for Three Months	Transfers	Deceased	Total Deductions	Membership - Net Total
1/36	21	1	0	0	22	-	0	0	0	0	22
7/36	38	0	0	0	38	-	0	0	0	0	38
1/37	-	-	-	-	85	-	0	19	-	1	65
7/37	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75
1/38	91	6	0	0	97	-	0	8	0	0	89*
1/39	90	3	14	0	109	-	0	12	4	0	93
7/39	110	4	4	0	118	-	1	8	0	0	109
1/40	106	2	15	0	123	0	1	6	0	0	116**
7/40	114	3	2	0	119	-	1	6	0	0	112
1/41	129	2	3	0	124	-	0	4	0	0	130
7/41	130	0	0	0	-	-	0	13	0	0	117
1/42	61	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	0	65
7/42	64	-	1	-	65	-	3	1	-	-	61
1/43	64	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	64
7/43	76	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	74

(continued)

FIGURE III (Continued)

Date	Membership in Preceding Report	New Members	Reinstated	Transfer	Total	Deductions - Honorable	Withdrawal	In Arrears for Three Months	Transfers	Deceased	Total Deductions	Membership - Net Total
1/44	116	7	6	0	129	-	0	5	0	0	5	124
1/45	310	13	0	0	323	-	0	7	0	0	7	316
7/45	384	4	0	0	388	-	1	0	0	0	1	387
1/46	589	34	0	0	623	-	0	10	0	0	10	613+
7/46	700	2	0	0	702	-	4	0	0	0	4	698++
1/47	810	17	0	0	827	-	15	52	0	0	67	760=
6/47	711	2	0	0	713	-	10	23	0	0	33	680
1/48	726	29	62	0	817	-	42	38	0	1	81	736

* Includes 24 members at UCLA

** College Sec organized 1/36 or earlier 1 monthly report

+ UCLA 13 Members - Los Angeles City College 10 members

++ UCLA 19 Members - Los Angeles City College 11 members

= All 760 listed as pay dues @ 25 - evidently College Locals Pulled Out

NOTE: Chart is based upon original membership reports submitted by Local 430 to AFT.

FIGURE IV
COMPARISON OF NATIONAL AFT AND LOCAL 430
MEMBERSHIP - 1936-48

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>LOCAL 430¹</u>	<u>NATIONAL AFT²</u>
1936	22	15,748
1937	65	22,795
1938	89	29,570
1939	109	32,064
1940	116	29,907
1941	130	22,215
1942	65	24,916
1943	64	27,329
1944	124	28,938
1945	316	31,086
1946	613	35,239
1947	760	41,874
1948	736	39,486

1. Figures are for January of each year.
2. Figures are for December of preceding year.